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# Inside Information

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## FARM PUBLICATIONS GOING ON NETWORK

Word is spreading fast about USDA's electronic news service, with some farm publications already requesting information as to how to access the new system.

Among the larger magazines inquiring are FARM JOURNAL, SUCCESSFUL FARMING and FARM BUSINESS. National Cotton Council also has indicated interest in tying-in to USDA's new electronic information system.

Meanwhile, the Minneapolis STAR-TRIBUNE's farm news editor plans to make arrangements with that firm's new electronic news service for farmers, which is already accessing the USDA news service, so that he can get USDA news releases faster than at the present time.

As a result of discussions between USDA News Center staff and information officers with USDA's Economic Research Service, Statistical Reporting Service and Foreign Agriculture Service, arrangements are expected which will result in more economic report summaries via USDA's electronic news service.

## NEW COSDA DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

The Communications Officers of State Departments of Agriculture (COSDA) has just issued a new listing of state agricultural information directors.

The directory lists the top public information officer in each state department of agriculture, address and telephone number.

John Nikoloff, press secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, is president of the organization. His address is 2301 North Cameron Street Harrisburg, PA 17120. His telephone number is (717) 787-5085.

Other COSDA officers are: First vice president, Charles Allen, chief of information services, Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Room 408, Mayo Building, Tallahassee, FL 32304, telephone (904) 488-6336; second vice president, Wayne T. Messerly, information officer, Iowa Department of Agriculture, Wallace Building, Des Moines, IA 50319, telephone (515) 281-5633; secretary, Mark Randal, public information director, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Jr. Livestock Building, State Fairgrounds, Springfield, IL 62706, telephone (217) 782-4849; and treasurer, Carlyle Teague, former public affairs director for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

Anyone interested in getting the latest directory of state department of agriculture communications officers may contact any one of the COSDA officers.

## SECRETARY BLOCK TO MEET WITH ACE GROUP

Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has accepted an invitation to meet with members of the Washington, D.C., region of Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE), March 9.

USDA agency information directors and center heads in the Office of Governmental & Public Affairs are being invited as special guests.

This will be the first meeting that Secretary Block has had with the agricultural communicators' group since he was named by President Reagan.

The meeting will be held in the Secretary's conference room, Room 104-A, at 11 a.m., the regular time and place for the weekly meeting of agency information directors and USDA's top public affairs/information officials.

The Washington ACE region holds regular monthly meetings. Last month the group saw excerpts from early USDA films (1920s and 1930s), including some "silents" and one of the first "talkies."

The educational, as well as entertaining, meeting ended with a full showing of the classic USDA film, "The Plow That Broke the Plains."

The special program was presented by USDA's Video-Film Center, headed by Larry Quinn.

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## PUBLIC COMMUNICATORS HANDBOOK AVAILABLE

"Informing the People: A Public Affairs Handbook," is the first handbook developed specifically for public communicators since 1968, according to the preface in the new book.

The preface further states: "This book has been planned to be useful not only to government information personnel, but also to line managers and program specialists who work with information on a day-to-day basis.

"Often, it's these executives in program areas who have the greatest need for realistic insights into public information practices, and the public affairs specialist spends a good deal of his or her time trying to educate those executives."

The book is organized into six sections: I--Overview; II--Legal Framework; III--Techniques of Public Information; IV--Managing Communication, Theory and Cases; V--Programs and Practices; and VI--Appendices.

The authors of the book are contributors from a variety of professional fields and include government public information executives, journalists who cover various aspects of government on a regular basis, private industry communicators who have dealt extensively with the government, and experts in public communication from academia.

The book covers both the practical and theoretical aspects of government communication, and also deals with questions such as who makes government information policy, and whether advocacy of government is good or bad.

The 359-page book was edited by Lewis M. Helm, Ray Eldon Hiebert, Michael R. Naver and Kenneth Rabin, and was published by Longman of New York. Cost is \$27.95.

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## YEARBOOK GOING ON SCREEN? MAYBE CIA....

A letter sent to Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block urged that a movie be made based on the 1981 Yearbook of Agriculture, "Will There Be Enough Food?"

The writer did not suggest a spy movie, but soon after his letter arrived, the CIA called and asked for eight copies of the yearbook.

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## AG COMMUNICATORS INVITED TO SCS MEETING

Government public affairs specialists from other agencies are welcome to attend and take part in the forthcoming Soil Conservation Service's national information conference and workshop in Fort Worth, Texas, according to SCS public information director Hubert Kelley.

Conference dates are Sunday evening, April 25, through noon Friday, April 30, 1982 (INSIDE INFORMATION, Feb. 22).

Kelley reports that most of the conference will consist of lectures and workshops applicable to the work of any government public affairs specialist, in or out of USDA.

The program includes sessions on making use of new developments in electronic news feeds, taking better photos, using cable TV, interviewing on radio/television, slanting farm news for urban audiences, and planning and executing coordinated campaigns.

It also includes a workshop session on laying out brochures on the grid system, and sessions on producing professional slide shows, holding technical conferences, running convention press operations, making title slides, covering research stories, and buying and using computer graphics.

For further information, call Kelley at (202) 447-4543.

He says that no training fee will be charged, but he would like to know by March 26 who plans to attend to assure adequate meeting space.

Registrants will stay at the downtown Metro Center Hotel, 6th and Commerce, Fort Worth, TX 76102.

The hotel is offering a special \$30 a day rate (single) on reservations tied to the SCS biennial national information conference.

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## AMS REGIONAL INFO DIRECTORS TO MEET

The five directors of the regional information offices administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service will be holding a management meeting in Washington, D.C., March 16-17, most likely the final meeting of all five.

Following the two-day meeting in Washington, the regional information directors will split into two groups for a final session, with one group meeting in New York and the other in Dallas.

The final sessions are related to closing of the New York and Dallas offices at the end of this month (INSIDE INFORMATION, Feb. 8).

Regional information directors attending the Washington sessions will be Connie Crunkleton, Atlanta; Herb Jackson, Chicago; Harold Bryson, Dallas; Ben Darling, San Francisco; and Werner Hietsch, (acting) New York.

The five AMS offices also provide information services to USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service and Food Inspection & Safety Service.

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## 1981 YEARBOOK SALES BEHIND LAST YEAR'S

Sales of USDA's 1981 Yearbook of Agriculture, "Will There Be Enough Food?", totaled 3,566 copies during the first two months since the book was published, according to the Superintendent of Documents.

This is slightly behind the pace of sales of the 1980 yearbook, "Cutting Energy Costs," which totaled 3,654 during its first seven weeks on the market.

And, sales of the 1981 yearbook are down considerably from sales of the 1979 yearbook, "What's to Eat?", which had tallied 9,219 copies during the first seven weeks after release.

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## SOUTH DAKOTA CHANGES DISTRIBUTION WAY

These are times to find ways to save money.

The South Dakota State University agricultural information office has traditionally sent news packets directly to weekly newspapers.

For budgetary and other reasons, the information staff decided to send the packet only to county Extension Service offices, and have the county offices distribute the releases to local news media contacts.

The plan went into effect in May 1980, according to Research Information Abstract No. 58, published by Mason Miller, communications specialist with USDA's Cooperative State Research Service.

A year after the South Dakota plan was implemented, county Extension Service staffs and weekly newspaper editors were surveyed by mail to see what happened.

There were responses from 53 of the 63 counties with Extension offices, and from 71 of the 143 weekly newspaper editors.

Was the packet move a success?

Based on the information the SDSU information staff gathered, it appears that this was generally a good decision, although it was apparent that both editors and county agents were not unanimous in their approval.

Agents were using the stories both as column material and as free-standing news articles.

Very few editors consider extension copy to be filler. Over half the editors said they receive about the same amount of copy as they had before the change was made.

Agents think the editors are printing about the same amount of extension copy as before.

Over half the editors said they get the copy from the county staff by mail. About a quarter said that someone usually brings it in.

Most editors and agents agreed that the service should be continued the way it is now.

The SDSU agricultural information staff believes that being able to put their news releases on the AGNET electronic mail system to the county offices will solve any problem of timeliness in the releases reaching the counties.

For additional information about the study conducted by John Pates, Jerry Leslie, Larry Tennyson and Deanna Boone, write to the Agricultural Information Office, S. Dakota State University, Brookings, SD 57007; or call (605)688-4187.

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